

This record is a partial extract of the original cable. The full text of the original cable is not available.

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NASSAU 000322

SIPDIS

E.O. 12958: DECL: 02/13/2014

TAGS: [MCAP](#) [PBTS](#) [PHSA](#) [PINS](#) [PREF](#)

SUBJECT: ROYAL BAHAMAS DEFENSE FORCE PREPAREDNESS -- A ROOT CAUSE FOR BAHAMIAN CONCERN

REF: NASSAU 285

- - - - -  
SUMMARY  
- - - - -

(1) (C) The possibility of uncontrolled outflows from Haiti is a dominant undercurrent in the on-going domestic debate in The Bahamas about the implications of current unrest throughout Haiti. Underlying this debate is Bahamian recognition that the country of 305,000 inhabitants is ill-equipped to control its own borders. The assets that the Royal Bahamian Defence Force (RBDF) could bring to bear in the event of large migrant outflows from Haiti to, or through, The Bahamas are extremely limited. The Royal Bahamas Defense Force navy includes only four currently functioning vessels. The Bahamas would be completely dependent on the United States in the event an uncontrolled outflow occurs.  
END SUMMARY

- - - - -  
HOW HELPFUL CAN THE RBDF BE IF A MASS MIGRATION OCCURS?  
- - - - -

(2) (C) The answer is, in summary, "not much." The RBDF has four currently operational medium/large vessels to patrol Bahamian territorial waters encompassing 100,000 square miles -- an area equal in size to the state of California.

13. (C) The RBDF naval complete inventory is 15 vessels, nine of which are currently operational, only four of which are large enough to patrol large areas. The inventory is as follows:

HMBS Nassau; HMBS Bahamas  
- - - - -

14. (SBU) These are two 60 meter, 375 ton displacement vessels, each with a patrolling range of 3,000 miles. Both of these two ships regularly patrols Southern Bahamian waters, under normal circumstances.

15. (C) The HMBS Nassau is operational. The HMBS Bahamas is out of service for the past three months for major engine repairs estimated to cost \$600,000. The government hopes that repairs could be effected by early March, but this goal is unlikely to be met. On February 9, Foreign Minister Fred Mitchell told Charge that he expected the "Bahamas" to be back in service by March 5. However, FM Mitchell's optimism has not been seconded by other Bahamian officials. RBDF and a senior Ministry of National Security official acknowledged to Charge February 11 that the HMBS Bahamas was unlikely to be returned to service before the end of March, at the earliest.

16. (C) To compensate for the absence of the HMBS Bahamas, the senior-most National Security officials have told Charge that they strongly favor using the U.S. Naval Base at Guantanamo for refueling and re-provisioning in order to increase the HMBS Nassau's on-site presence. FM Mitchell is reluctant to support this action for political reasons. RBDF Commodore Rolle is simply reluctant.

HMBS Yellow Elder; HMBS Port Nelson; HMBS Samana  
- - - - -

17. (SBU) These are 33-meter vessels, each with a patrolling range of 600 miles. One of the ships in this category regularly patrols Southern Bahamian waters.

18. (C) HMBS Yellow Elder is operational. The "Port Nelson" and "Samana," are currently out of service with no return to service date predicted.

HMBSA Inagua  
- - - - -

19. (SBU) The "Inagua" is an 18 meter, 30 ton vessel with a patrolling range of 650 miles. This vessel regularly patrols the Exuma Islands and the Ragged Island Basin.

Smaller Vessels With Limited Patrolling Capabilities  
- - - - -

¶10. (SBU) There are also two 12-meter vessels, each with a patrolling range of 600 miles. One regularly patrols the Exumas and southern New Providence islands. The other is currently out of service for an engine rebuild. The return to service date is unknown, but the repair has been scheduled.

¶11. (SBU) The fleet rounds off with four 6-meter Boston Whalers that are based at Nassau Harbor and perform security patrols in the country's principal cruise ship port and three "go-fast" boats. One of the go-fasts is currently operational and based at the RDDF headquarters base in Coral Harbor on New Providence Island. The other two "go-fasts" are undergoing repairs with unknown return to service dates.

Comment

- - - - -

¶12. (C) As this overview indicates, the Bahamian fleet is modest and effectively incapable, even under normal circumstances, of fulfilling the RBDF's roles of drug and alien interdiction, interdiction of fish poachers within The Bahamas' exclusive economic zone, and frequent search and rescue operations in the 100,000 square miles of Bahamian territorial seas. Effectively, there are only eight vessels suitable for patrol between The Bahamas and Haiti and half of these are out of service for mechanical reasons.

WITAJEWSKI